

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Sunday, April 26, 2009

Wyoming Department of Health Offers Swine Flu Update, Advice

As national and international public health officials investigate growing numbers of swine flu cases, Wyoming Department of Health officials are offering recommendations to Wyoming healthcare providers and residents.

Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health, said there are no confirmed cases in Wyoming and no suspected cases being investigated by the department at this time.

“However, with so many different locations of swine flu cases being reported around the world right now, it is realistic to expect this virus to be present in our state at low levels now or in the near future,” Murphy said. “We will continue to closely monitor the situation in Wyoming.”

The Wyoming Department of Health is advising Wyoming medical professionals to consider the swine flu virus as they care for and test patients with flu-like illness who have recently traveled to Mexico or who have been in contact with others who have traveled to that country. The department’s “health alert notice” also encourages continued influenza testing around the state.

Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer, said so far the reported illnesses in the United States have been relatively mild with no reported deaths. “But that doesn’t mean Wyoming residents shouldn’t stay informed and take common-sense precautions to protect themselves and their families,” he said. “The ‘usual’ seasonal flu is responsible for about 36,000 deaths around the country each year and is a significant burden on lost productivity.”

Steps to help prevent the spread of swine flu or other viruses recommended by Sherard and Murphy include:

- Avoiding contact with ill persons.
- Covering noses and mouths with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing, and throwing used tissues in a trash can.
- Frequent hand washing with soap and water, or the use of an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Staying home from work, school, or travel while ill with flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat and body aches. Sherard said those who are severely ill (such as having trouble breathing) should seek medical care.

“These are the kinds of activities we recommend each year to help prevent the spread of seasonal flu and they make sense for the current situation as well,” Sherard said.

Swine flu is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by a type A influenza virus that regularly causes outbreaks of influenza among pigs. While swine flu viruses do not normally infect people, the

strain of swine flu virus that is currently in the news has been confirmed to spread from human to human. Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food and a person cannot get swine influenza from eating pork products.

More information about the current swine flu situation is available online from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/>.

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